

Eliza Ward House  
2 George Street  
Providence  
Providence County  
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-207

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
107-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## ELIZA WARD HOUSE

Address: 2 George Street, Providence, Providence County,  
Rhode Island.

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
107-

1 George Street in 1824; Plat 12, Lot 238.

Present Owner  
and Occupant: Robert P. Brown, Jr.

Present Use: Dwelling.

Brief Statement  
of Significance: This is a large, brick house, built soon after  
1814, with very elegant interiors.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

## 1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1772 William Field sells for \$250 to Joseph Brown a certain Goreing lot of land adjoining on the E/ly side of the Back Street (called Benefit) bounded W/ly about 110' and S/ly about 14' on Joseph Crawford's land by the Burial place and E/ly about 200' on Archibald Young's land he bought of my Mother and N/ly about 93' on Nicholas Brown's "garding," reserving liberty for the said Young and heirs to pass and repass with team or on horseback to drive cattle by a 12' driftway through the Goreing lot. . . Deed Book 20, page 50, in Providence City Hall.
- 1786 WILL: Joseph Brown: Leaves all Real Estate to his two sons Obediah and Joseph and his two daughters, Elizabeth and Polly. . . Wills Book 7, page 6, in Providence City Hall.
- 1798 Notes at the Rhode Island Historical Society gathered by Henry R. Chace in preparation of his book, Owners and Occupants of the Lots, Houses and Shops in the Town of Providence, Rhode Island in the Town of Providence, Rhode Island in 1798, Located on Maps of the Highways of that Date (Providence, 1914): Joseph Brown heirs. . . a goring lot N side of George St W by Benefit Street 16';

N by N Brown heirs; E 25' and 70' deep.

- 1809 FIRE RECORD: Obadiah Brown (heir of Joseph) NW end of George Street. . occupied by Proven black man. .Wood 14'x20'. . 1 story, gambrel roof. . . Mss. fire insurance records of the Providence Mutual Insurance Company at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, R. I., Vol. 3 . . policy #1166.
- 1814 Mss. tax descriptions in the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, for the 1814 Providence direct tax to the federal government: Joseph Brown heirs. .a small gore of land on Benefit and George Street. .(this is ALL the family owns except the Rope Walk Lot). It has the shell of a negro house on it. (N.B. Eliza Ward, daughter of Joseph Brown MAY have owned this, but the "W's" are missing in the 1814 tax).
- 1823 Nicholas Brown sells to Thomas P Ives a piece of land called the "Garden Lot" "formerly belonging to my honored Father, deceased," except a small part thereof which has been agreed to be deeded to Mrs Ward on which part of her Brick House is built.. . Deed Book 48, page 363, in Providence City Hall.
- 1824 Nicholas Brown et al sell for \$500 to Eliza Ward, widow, a certain piece of land bounded: Beginning at a point on the E side of Benefit Street and 21' N/ly from the junction of the N line of George Street and Benefit Street, said point being the NW corner of the grantees land, thence N/ly with said Benefit Street 18', thence E/ly 52'9" to or near the NW corner of the grantees Wood House to a point which is 42' N of the N line of George Street thence continuing E/ly and ranging with the said Wood House and bounding thereon 35'3" to a point at the NE corner of said Wood House which point is 47'6" N/ly of the N line of said George Street, thence turning and running S/ly 21'6" to the NE corner of the grantees land, thence turning and running W/ly with said Grantees land to the first mentioned corner. . .Deed Book 49, page 116, in Providence City Hall.
- 1824 Providence Directory. . . Eliza Ward listed at this address.
- 1845 WILL: Eliza Ward leaves "the residue of my estate to Moses Brown Ives, in trust for the use and

benefit of my niece, Eliza B Rogers. . . Wills Book 15, page 200, in Providence City Hall.

1878 WILL: Eliza B Rogers:. . ."all the rest, residue and remainder of my Estate both real and personal, I give and devise to my niece Maria M Benedict (also sole executrix) originally Martha Maine Benedict. . . Wills Book 26, page 241, in Providence City Hall.

1892 Emory Lyon and Oliver A Washburn executors u/w Maria M Benedict sell the property to the West side company bounded: W by Benefit Street 31.63'; S by George Street 72'; E by Elizabeth Gammell and Hope Russell 63'; N by Hope Russell 88'. . . Deed Book 372, page 479, in Providence City Hall.

The property changed hands several times and was taxed to the following persons:

1899 Marsden Perry	1946 Hannibal Hamlin & wife
1904 Benjamin A Jackson	Margaret
1904 Charles W Higgins	1949 Robert P Brown jr
1923 Wilhelmina C West	
1932 Thomas H West Jr	
1936 Rhode Island Historical Trust Co.	
tr u/w Thos H West jr	

2. Date of erection: Between 1814 and 1823; probably soon after 1814, see Supplemental Information, . . .
3. Notes on alterations and additions: According to the 1903 newspaper article quoted below (Supplemental Information, Part I, B of this report) extensive "improvements" were made to the house during the ownership of Marsden J. Perry from 1892 until 1903. Alfred Stone, the architect mentioned in the article, was at this time a partner in the firm of Stone, Carpenter and Willson. In addition to the doorway mentioned in the article, changes were apparently made to the dining room, the bathrooms, and possibly the ground floor study. The interior of the kitchen wing to the east of the house is all later.
4. Sources of information: American Architect and Building News, The Georgian Period, Part XII (1902), Plate 36, shows a photograph of the present doorway on the house.

B. Supplemental Material: The following is transcribed from the Providence Journal, December 28, 1903:

"The old brick mansion at #2 George Street, formerly the residence of Marsden J. Perry was sold at noon yesterday by G L and H J Gross for \$11,000. Only three bids were

received the highest being B A Jackson. The first bid was \$7000 and after two more bids it was knocked down to Mr Jackson for \$11,000. Mr Perry spent between \$43,000 and \$45,000 for improvements.

"The house was purchased by Mr Perry in 1892. The house was built soon after 1814 by Mrs. Eliza Ward, daughter of Joseph Brown who purchased the land in 1771. The architecture is Colonial, the woodwork simple yet effective. The wall paper in the drawing rooms is contemporary with the building of the house and has been carefully preserved.. Alfred Stone, architect, designed the doorway."

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey  
for the Providence Preservation Society  
February 1962.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a large brick house, built soon after 1814. It has elegant interiors with elaborate, delicate wood trim, and two rooms with French wallpaper contemporary with the house.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent

### B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Main block, 46' (5 bays) x 35', two-and-a-half stories plus elevated basement at the west end, faces south. Kitchen wing to northeast, about 18' x 25'.
2. Foundations: Regular coursed ashlar granite.
3. Wall construction: Brick, common bond
4. Stoops: Main entrance stoop; two granite steps; scrolled, iron railings.
5. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys in main block in outside walls, one in wing.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Eight-panel main entrance door with side lights and elliptical top light with delicate metal mullions; this doorway added in 1890's, Alfred Stone, architect; there are no

apparent signs in the masonry that the location size or shape of the original entrance opening was altered to receive this doorway. Doorway from dining room to small terrace at the southeast corner of lot may also date from the 1890's; double door with lighted upper half and paneled lower half, side lights, elliptical fan light. Service door on south side of kitchen wing, and elevator entrance on north side from rear parking area.

- b. Windows: Six over six light double hung windows, stone sills and lintels, adjustable louvered shutters. Bay window over entrance at stair landing between first and second floor.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Hip roof on main block, mansard roof on kitchen wing; covered with slate.
- b. Cornice: Molded wood cornice
- c. Dormers: Two gabled dormers on south front of main block, with six over six light double hung windows. Similar dormers in mansard roof of wing.

C. Technical Description of Interior

- 1. Floor plans: Central hall plan with entrance at basement level, main stairway to first floor and second floor at south end of central hall near entrance. Library in basement at southwest corner where it is at ground level. First floor: double parlors on west side joined by wide archway; long dining room on east side probably dates from 1890's in its present form, probably two rooms originally; dining room leads through pantry to wing with kitchen and service rooms. Bedrooms on second floor in similar arrangement.
- 2. Stairways: Stairway from entrance level to second floor at the south end of the central hall. U-shape with single flight to first floor, double flight to second floor; open well; elaborate, delicate, detail. Round handrail curves without break from scroll at the entrance level to second floor; slender rectangular balusters, three per step. Open string stairs with carved step end, fan ornaments.
- 3. Flooring: 3-1/2" strip flooring.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster walls and ceiling cornices. Silver tea paper in dining room. Wallpaper in northwest parlor: Les Rives de Bosphore (Banks of the Bosphorus) printed by Joseph Dufour in France c. 1816, landscapes with a river and caiques (see: Nancy McClelland, Historic Wallpapers, Philadelphia, 1924, pp. 179, 273, 364, 365, 439). Wallpaper in adjoining southwest parlor: Les Incas (The Incas, commonly known as Pizarro in Peru) printed by A. Leroy, son-in-law and successor to Joseph Dufour, in France in 1832, shows the invasion of Peru by Pizarro in 1531 (see: McClelland, Historic Wallpapers, pp. 172, 322, 323, 441).
  5. Doors and doorways: Six-panel wood doors, flat sunk panels, molded wood doorways.
  6. Trim: Elaborate and extensive wood trim throughout the house, delicate in scale; paneling, molding, reeding, folding inside shutters. Archway between parlors. Dining room: Alcove at south west off with an archway, garden entrance vestibule off east side of dining room set off in an archway, shell niche cupboard on north fireplace wall, paneled wainscoting. Palladian window at north end of hallway, with fluted Ionic pilasters. Elaborate pantry cupboards.
  7. Hardware: Small brass knobs, either case locks or open locks, elaborate butt hinges with L-shaped straps on front door.
  8. Lighting: Electric
  9. Heating: Central hot air. Marble mantels in parlors may be later. Simple, wood, paneled mantel in dining room. Two-story wood mantel in library with Doric and Ionic colonettes and broken pediment. Paneled wood mantels in bedrooms on second floor.
- D. Site: Northeast corner Benefit and George Streets; very small lot, slopes steeply from east down to west. House set at sidewalk line on south front and nearly fills the lot, with small triangular wedge of yard on west side and small terrace off dining room on southeast. Yard and terrace elevated above sidewalk level and enclosed with stone and brick walls. Sidewalk along east boundary leads to service entrance in kitchen wing. Parking area in rear off alley.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect  
National Park Service  
January 1962